



NEWS RELEASE

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WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FORMER PARAMEDIC PLEADS GUILTY TO DILUTING AMBULANCE PAINKILLERS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a former paramedic who worked for several Northland ambulance services pleaded guilty in federal court today to diluting pain-relieving drugs supplied to an ambulance service in Pleasant Valley, Mo.

Craig J. Starr, 40, of Liberty, Mo., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner this afternoon to two counts of tampering with consumer products. **Starr**, who formerly worked as a paramedic for ambulance services in Pleasant Valley, Liberty and Claycomo, was indicted by a federal grand jury on Aug. 19, 2003.

By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Starr** admitted that on two occasions between Sept. 12, 2002, and Jan. 13, 2003, he tampered with Demerol 100mg/ml carpupjects (or vials) by removing the pain-relieving drug from the carpupjects and substituting another substance in its place. As a result of **Starr's** tampering, the potency and strength of the Demerol in the carpupjects was reduced from 100mg/ml to an undetectable amount. **Starr** acknowledged that his actions were done with reckless disregard for, and extreme indifference to, the risk that another person would be placed in danger of death or bodily injury.

Both counts of the alleged tampering, Graves added, involved painkillers supplied to ambulances serving Pleasant Valley.

“Although it’s a possibility, there is no direct evidence that any patient received the diluted vials of Demerol,” Graves said.

“**Starr** was using the painkiller to treat symptoms of his own medical condition,” Graves explained. “He took the drug for his own use, then diluted the vials of Demerol. There is no evidence or allegation that **Starr** attempted to illegally sell Demerol to anyone else.”

Under federal statutes, **Starr** could be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole. His sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gregg R. Coonrod. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Missouri Department of Health Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Liberty, Mo., Police Department, the Pleasant Valley, Mo., Police Department, and the Claycomo, Mo., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow